

2014

# Where y'at

Kelly Michelle Mullins

*Louisiana State University and Agricultural and Mechanical College*

Follow this and additional works at: [https://digitalcommons.lsu.edu/gradschool\\_theses](https://digitalcommons.lsu.edu/gradschool_theses)



Part of the [Arts and Humanities Commons](#)

---

## Recommended Citation

Mullins, Kelly Michelle, "Where y'at" (2014). *LSU Master's Theses*. 2867.  
[https://digitalcommons.lsu.edu/gradschool\\_theses/2867](https://digitalcommons.lsu.edu/gradschool_theses/2867)

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Graduate School at LSU Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in LSU Master's Theses by an authorized graduate school editor of LSU Digital Commons. For more information, please contact [gradetd@lsu.edu](mailto:gradetd@lsu.edu).

# WHERE Y'AT

A Thesis

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the  
Louisiana State University and  
Agricultural and Mechanical College  
in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of  
Master of Fine Arts

in

The School of Art

by  
Kelly Mullins  
B.A., Spring Hill College, 2011  
May 2014

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT .....	iii
CHAPTER	
1 INTRODUCTION .....	1
2 BACKGROUND .....	2
Graphic Design .....	2
Iconography .....	2
3 RESEARCH.....	3
Information Graphics .....	3
4 PROCESS .....	8
5 FORMAT AND RESULTS .....	14
Website .....	14
Illustration Poster Series .....	16
QR Code Map .....	23
Data Series .....	25
6 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS .....	29
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	31
VITA.....	32

## **ABSTRACT**

My work is a culmination of my studies of graphic design methods and principles, including the extensive research I have completed on Louisiana and the city of New Orleans. I created a large-scale poster series of information graphics that explores the main cultural characteristics and statistics of the parishes in Louisiana of which I was raised. The series contains two types of graphics, a website, and a QR code system. A QR code is a matrix barcode that is readable by QR scanners, mobile phones with cameras, and smartphones. The QR codes I created link the viewer to specific websites related to the information on display. The placement of the QR codes brings in a useable application to the design.

The two types of graphics consist of one being purely illustrative and the other based off of statistics and graphs. The illustrations contain iconographic designs that focus on the main attractions and cultural icons of the city, while the other information systems are based on statistics such as the parish's population, income, sales, and land area. I focused on the three main parishes where I was raised for the statistical infographics. They were all based on the same information so that they are easily comparable to one another. The system I developed is large in scale, filled with visual abstractions, and allows for communication between the diagram and the audience. It is very important to me that my audience can visually enjoy my work and has the opportunity to interact with it as well. I have created graphic visual representations of data that present complex information rapidly and clearly. My work has allowed me to cross language barriers and inform viewers on the history of Louisiana.



## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

When people are confronted with large amounts of data, it can be confusing or unreadable. Audiences tend to glance over complex information without reading or understanding the content. Data can be found very easily now through the Internet, but it still needs to be “filtered through and evaluated” for someone to make sense of it.<sup>1</sup> This is why information management is a central tool in today’s society. Information graphics, or infographics, are comprised of complex data that is communicated through color, typography, illustration, and a variety of media. Infographics are an outlet for visual problem solving or storytelling; and they help information become understandable and engaging. This is important because my investigation has turned into a type of narrative. My work has evolved into a series of information systems that allow a viewer to envision my cultural identity and heritage. I have found information design to be a new way of communicating and connecting with my audience and it provides me with a new approach to problem solving through typography, color theory, illustration, and interactive design.

---

<sup>1</sup> Rendgen, Sandra, *Information Graphics* (Köln: Taschen, 2012), 9.

## **CHAPTER 2: BACKGROUND**

### **Graphic Design**

Graphic designers often combine images and typography throughout their work, but imagery itself can be a very effective tool all on its own. An image can convey an entire message; “Images can be incredibly powerful and compelling tools of communication, conveying not only information but also moods and emotions.”<sup>2</sup> People often interpret images and graphics based on their own individual personalities and cultural backgrounds. This type of graphic communication is significant to my development as a graphic designer. With a background in painting, I have always been drawn to hand-drawn images and typography. I also enjoy the incorporation of audience interaction with my work, which has led me to include three-dimensional or hand-held pieces with the majority of my thesis work.

### **Iconography**

The images that I create take the form of an icon once they are rendered into the computer. An icon is a type of illustration that represents information in a condensed form and is usually used as an identifying mark. In order to create an effective icon, a designer must have a clear understanding of the object being represented and the knowledge of its viewers. The abstraction of an image is another thing I learned from painting. This is why I have come to use icons throughout my graphic design work. To create an icon I have to look at the details of the object and break them all down into the most essential parts. This abstract representation is more universal and it becomes recognizable to a wider range of viewers. This abstraction technique helps me effectively manage content and form, while communicating information distinctly and imaginatively through my information graphics.

---

<sup>2</sup> Sharon Helmer Poggenpohl, *Graphic Design: A Career Guide and Education Directory* (The American Institute of Graphic Arts, 1993), <http://www.aiga.org/guide-what-is-graphic-design>.

## CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH

### Information Graphics

Information graphics, such as maps, statistical charts in the newspaper and diagrams for economical purposes, have been around for thousands of years. A recently discovered, prehistoric map of the night sky is thought to date back 16,500 years.<sup>3</sup> Today this aspect of design is becoming more and more popular because, “communication is shifting towards generally shorter texts in combination with charts and images.”<sup>4</sup> People have become very interested in the way that information graphics can turn complex data into understandable images.

Infographics are not the easiest of areas in graphic design to define because they use a combination of design elements. Information systems can be seen as hybrids of text, imagery, and shapes that form together to become one product. Jaques Bertin, a French cartographer, explains this as, “A graphic representation is not merely a drawing, but often entails a heavy responsibility when deciding on how to proceed. One does not ‘draw’ a graphic representation in solid form; instead one constructs it and rearranges it until every relationship between the data has been revealed.”<sup>5</sup> This makes infographics even more intriguing. Their development does not just materialize from the data, but it has to be developed by the designer.

Edward Tufte is a Professor at Yale University where he has taught courses in statistical evidence and information design. His writings on “the visual display of data and evidence” have been a huge influence throughout my research.<sup>6</sup> He states that information design is an

---

<sup>3</sup> David Whitehouse, *Ice Age Star Map Discovered* (BBC, 2000), <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/science/nature/871930.stm>.

<sup>4</sup> Rendgen, Sandra, *Information Graphics* (Köln: Taschen, 2012), 9.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Edward Tufte, *Envisioning Information* (Cheshire, Connecticut: Graphics Press LLC, 1990)

intersection of image, word, number, and art. It becomes a type of “cognitive art”, which allows viewers to begin envisioning the information it is representing.<sup>7</sup> To make sure certain data is presented accurately and clearly, information design requires a set of principles and instruments. Tufte explains these instruments “The instruments are those of writing and typography, of managing large data sets and statistical analysis, of line and layout and color. And the standards of quality are those derived from visual principles that tell us how to put the right mark in the right place.”<sup>8</sup> The infographic principles that I incorporated in my design are scale, comparisons, and icons and multiples.

### **Scale**

Edward Tufte states that one of the most essential tasks of information design is to “enrich the density of the data” that is being used within the design.<sup>9</sup> Sometimes this is difficult to overcome because the designer has to conceive a way to do this while working with a flat, two-dimensional surface. Once the designer can enrich the information the viewer can begin to, “envision the information in order to reason about, communicate, document, and preserve that knowledge.”<sup>10</sup> It is necessary to increase the dimensionality, complexity, and beauty of the information, and one way to go about this is through increased scale.

When working with scale in an information system, a designer has to consider two things: the overall scale of the whole system and the scale of the individual elements in the system. A principle that Tufte demonstrates in his book *Envisioning Information* is micro/macro composition. This principle focuses on hierarchical system where the designer makes some

---

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 9.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 33.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

elements large and others small. This helps distinguish which elements are the most important in the system. Micro/macro composition also refers to how a large-scale system offers the viewer a choice to be interested in the subject matter and then gives them the option to walk up and begin studying the smaller details of the system. Tufte describes this idea by saying, “Panorama, vista, and prospect deliver to viewers the freedom of choice that derives from an overview, a capacity to compare and sort through detail. And that micro-information... provides a credible refuge where the pace of visualization is condensed, slowed, and personalized.”<sup>11</sup>

In my research I create large-scale information systems so that they provide focus and interest for my audience, and then allows them to make the choice to take a closer look. At this moment, the viewer can take time to analyze the content in front of them. The control of the information is transferred to the viewer at this point, which allows, “viewers to select, to narrate, to recast and personalize data for their own uses.”<sup>12</sup> The audience begins to make their own interpretations about the piece, while examining the information they are most intrigued with. It also allows them to start to make personal connections and comparisons with the piece.

## **Comparisons**

When viewers begin to analyze an information system it is important that they identify comparisons either within experiences from their own life or by comparing multiple elements in the system. When the viewer is being asked to make comparisons between the elements in the system it is important to have a cohesive design. Tufte says that, “constancy of design puts the emphasis on changes in data, not changes in data frames.”<sup>13</sup> When the framework in the system remains constant the audience can begin to make comparison by seeing the differences among the objects in the system. I used this principle throughout my designs as well. Once the

---

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 38.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 50.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 67.

viewer decodes one part of the system, that familiarity will carry over to the next section, “As our eye moves from one image to the next, this constancy of design allows viewers to focus on changes in information rather than changes in graphical composition.”<sup>14</sup> This is a statement said by Edward Tufte to describe an image on air pollution (Figure 1) where the same design structure is repeated for all of the images. To be able to measure statistical data a viewer must be able to distinguish “a sense of average” and also when that average begins to vary.<sup>15</sup>

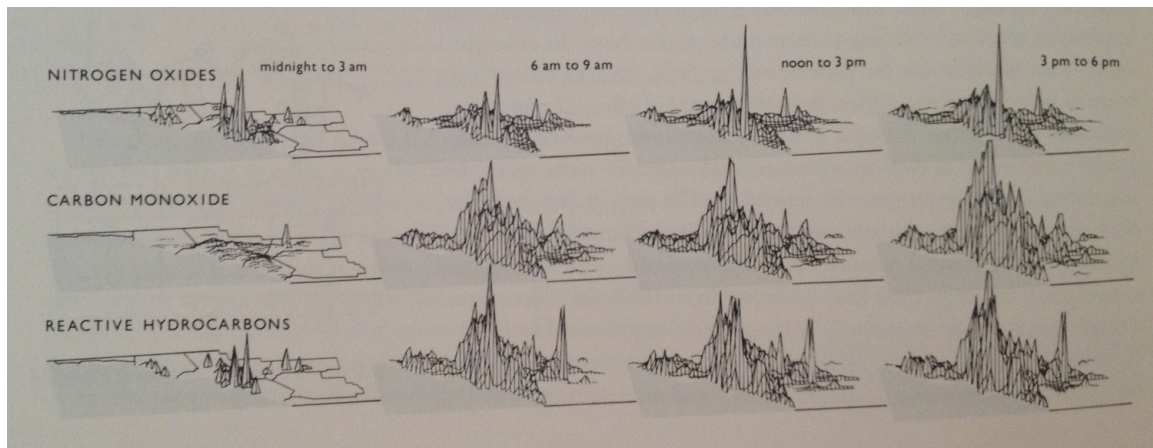


Figure 1, G.J. McRae, W.R. Goodin, and J.H. Seinfeld, *Development of a Second-Generation Mathematical Model for Urban Air Pollution. I. Model Formulation*, 1982, redrawn for Edward Tufte's book *Envisioning Information*

Color can also play an important role in comparisons. By applying color, a designer and the audience can begin to discern between different elements in the system, while also linking certain elements together. Color can be used as a constant and then further used to show different categories within that constant. The application of color also evokes a lot of personal emotion and it can be used to express a feeling or experience. With the use of color and layering, a designer can begin to reduce noise, enrich the content, and separate the data.

### Contrast and Multiples

A system of multiples occurs when one object or element is repeated over and over again.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 29.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 32.

When multiples of one element are shown, it is natural for one to begin to select and make contrast between them. One way to make successful multiples is through the use of icons. With small pictorial images viewers can easily see, distinguish, and select. This can be seen in Yumi Takahashi and Ikuyo Shibukawa's *Color Coordination* (Figure 2). These small multiples of colored shirts allow for comparisons to be made within our eyespan. When a condensed image such as an icon is repeated the audience can easily see variations in color, size, or number. Icons help the viewer envision and relate to what the designer is trying to compare and contrast. Iconography involves the interpretation of a subject matter from the content of an image, or icon. Designers use the icon to specifically describe, identify and interpret the subject matter being studied.



Figure 2, Yumi Takahashi and Ikuyo Shibukawa, *Color Coordination*, 1985, redrawn for Edward Tufte's book *Envisioning Information*

With the combination of words, numbers, shapes and images, information graphics become a design style that is both rich in content and artistic. My thesis work consists of purely illustrative systems along with diagrams. This allows for the information to be presented iconographically and in a systematic, graphic form. Through this combination I am able to create well-designed and thoughtfully crafted information systems to represent my thesis project.

## CHAPTER 4: PROCESS

In addition to my extensive research on information graphics, I have conducted research on Louisiana and three of its main parishes that influenced my life over the years. I was raised in St. Tammany; my entire extended family resides in Orleans, and my later years as a designer have been spent in East Baton Rouge. Each of these parishes has molded me into the person I am today through their environment and culture. Louisiana is the only state in the United States of America that is broken up into parishes, while other states designate counties. Unlike information graphics, this data and information was already an integral part of my personal experience. My objective was to determine how to incorporate my culture into my work, while helping people who are not from Louisiana, understand its rich heritage.

The success of an infographic depends highly on its subject matter. The subject matter needs to be relatable, while allowing for comparisons inside and outside the system. It is important to focus on something that needs further explanation and that would benefit from visual portrayals. Louisiana is a unique melting pot of culture, food, music, and festivities. There are many words and phrases that are specific to Louisiana's vernacular, and its language is especially unique. Over the years I have noticed that the Cajun-French words used by locals to describe places, areas, and objects are often difficult for nonresidents to interpret or pronounce. Since these words and phrases are often in need of translation, I decided to depict them in a series of one hundred icons. The abstraction of these Louisiana icons enables me to cross language barriers and facilitate a visitor's perspective of local customs.

The icons represent and portray the unique characteristics related to the state of Louisiana and the city of New Orleans. As an entry-point for the viewer, the beginning icons illustrated commonly known items such as the New Orleans streetcar and Bourbon Street. As the icons progressed my work went deeper than the stereotypical understanding of Louisiana. I began to focus on less well-known icons and more on my personal histories as a local. Every



icon was created in black and white and I wrote a descriptive sentence that went along with each image. I chose to represent the icons in a series of hand-held playing cards (Figures 3 & 4). The cards were an interactive, learning game called *Where Y'at*, in which the viewer would see the icon on one side and then the description on the back. The icons required creating simplified marks that are easily identifiable and visually interesting, but I wanted them to fit into a tightly woven design system. I began experimenting with color and categories to help the viewer's interaction and understanding of the data.

I created multiple information graphics that organized a wide range of data and information and became very interested in taking analytical data and organizing it into imagery that was appealing and relatable. The large scale of my information graphics helped focus the viewer's attention and then draw them in to examine the fine details of the work. After these experimentations I realized that my New Orleans icons could be organized through an infographic. The large-scale would allow all of the icons to be displayed on one system, and the viewer could begin to see relationships and comparisons. Along with scale, the application of color allowed for organization and categorization.

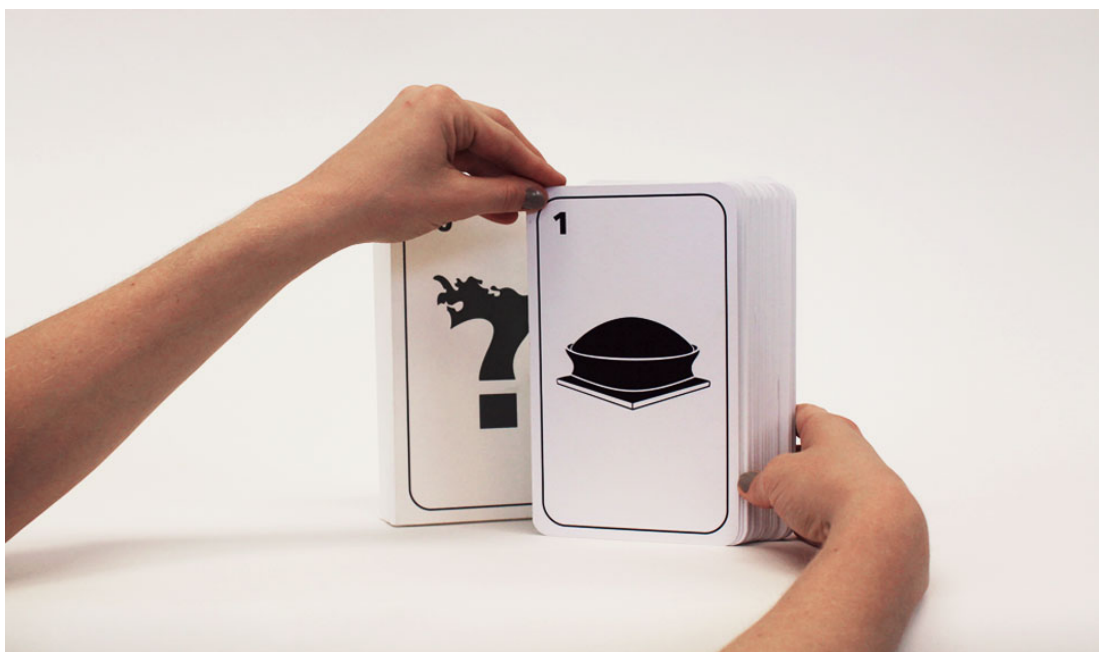


Figure 3, *Where Y'at*, 2012, a series of hand-constructed playing cards



Figure 4, *Where Y'at*, 2012, a series of hand-constructed playing cards

I developed a large-scale information graphic (Figure 5) that combines my icons with text descriptions, color systems, and interactive elements. Again, the information system is meant to help people, who are not from Louisiana, understand its rich heritage. The concept behind the infographic was to design a periodic table of elements, where the elements are all about Louisiana and the city of New Orleans.

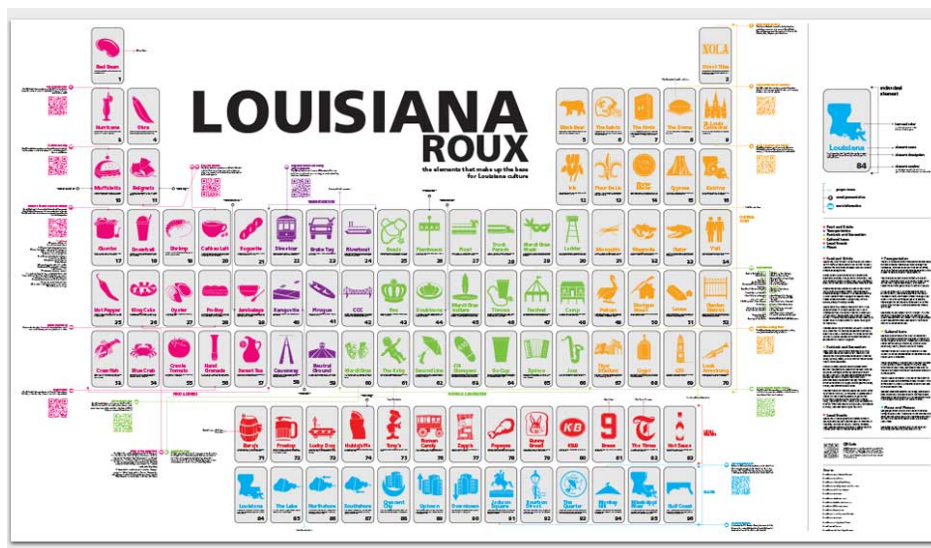


Figure 5, *Louisiana Roux*, 2013

The title of the piece was the *Louisiana Roux* because the elements that were placed on the map are “the base” for Louisiana culture. The infographic was broken up into six categories: food and drinks, transportation, festivals and recreation, cultural icons, local brands, and places. Each one of these categories was represented by a different color and each element fell into a category. Each category was also given a description in the map’s key.

Some icons needed more than just the sentence description that was underneath it, and that extra information was communicated in the side panels of the graphic. This extra information was supplemented by a QR code (Figure 6). A QR Code is a matrix barcode that is readable by QR scanners, mobile phones with cameras, and smartphones. The QR Codes link the viewer to specific websites related to the specific item featured. The icon and information system allow viewers to gather specific information relating to their own interests, or enabling them to discover an aspect of Louisiana that only the locals experience.



Figure 6, *Louisiana Roux*, 2013, close-up image of QR code system

In an attempt to be more inclusive and expand my developments I introduced Louisiana cities that have played an important role in my life. This new series of information systems







## **CHAPTER 5: FORMAT AND RESULTS**

I created a large-scale poster series of information graphics that explores the main cultural characteristics and statistics of Louisiana. Again, this series focused on three main parishes in Louisiana: Orleans, East Baton Rouge, and St. Tammany. This series contains two types of poster formats, one being a purely illustrative and the other being more statistical and graphic. Posters became the ideal format because they allowed for a large-scale. This scale allows for the audience to visually move through each poster's environment. Another main component to the series is a website that corresponds with the information being displayed on the posters.

### **Website**

Although the system of posters was a success I wanted to explore a method of making the information accessible as well as mobile. A large poster would never be taken anywhere or carried around with someone. A website would allow my icons to remain organized and placed in a system, but also easily accessible by everyone wherever they are. The site contains all of the Louisiana icons and they are broken into six categories: food and drinks, transportation, recreation, cultural icons, local brands, and places. The home page (Figure 9) displays all of the icons in random order and as you hover over them they display a color. The colors are used as a coding system again to break the icons into each category. There are also sub pages (Figure 10) that are designated to each particular category. This way the viewer can always just view the icons they want to see or the ones that go together as a group.

Once you click on an individual icon a new page (Figure 11) opens up. Each icon has its own page where a large image is displayed and the sentence that describes it is underneath. Certain pages include extra information on the icons. An additional interactive feature is the pronunciation of the word, the icons proper name, and hyperlinks to related icons from other categories or to an external website that provides the viewer with additional information. The

coding was developed to enable interactivity easily accessible in one place on the Internet. The site is [www.thelouisianaroux.com](http://www.thelouisianaroux.com).

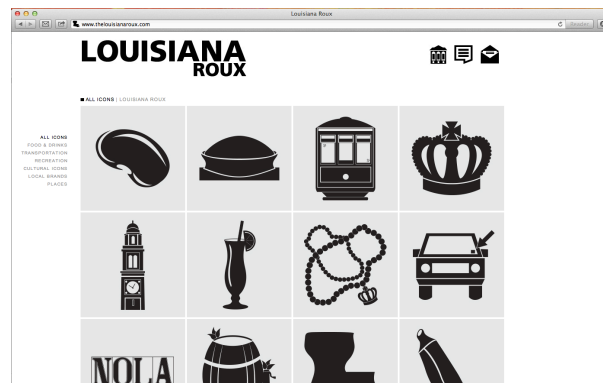


Figure 9, *Louisiana Roux*, 2014, Home Page



Figure 10, *Louisiana Roux*, 2014, Sub Page

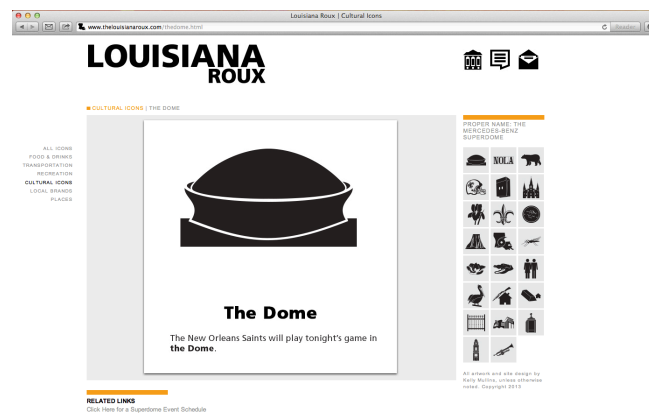


Figure 11, *Louisiana Roux*, 2014, Individual Icon Page

### Illustration Poster Series

The illustration series, *Envisioning Louisiana*, depicts main attractions and cultural icons of Louisiana and the three parishes. This purely illustrative piece features iconographic symbols as imagery. The icons are abstractions that make the content more generic and easily identifiable for viewers. The illustrations, even with limited text, become a visualization of data through images and composition. Viewers can begin to compare their own cultural heritage and experiences with my own as they view the large, rich illustration.

I created a series of six iconographic posters. Each poster has its own specific theme. Four of the posters focus on the three parishes: Orleans (Figures 12 & 13), St. Tammany (Figure 14), and East Baton Rouge (Figure 15). The other two focus on two very important Louisiana cultural characteristics: food (Figure 16) and festivals (Figure 17). The illustrations are derived from many of the icons from the *Louisiana Roux* website and I made sure all of the important individual topics are included. Both the website and the posters are meant to inform, but the posters lean more towards entertainment.

The composition and colors in the illustrations represent Louisiana's rich and colorful culture and atmosphere. Whether a specific parish or Louisiana as a whole, the imagery focuses on its core components, a local's perspective, and what a tourist would want to see or do when they visit Louisiana. The illustrations contain icons and images that represent particular places and locations, customs, food, transportation, and other cultural aspects of the area. Each illustration was hand-rendered and carefully constructed to fit into the poster format. For the composition I thought about the relationships between the icons or their actual location in the parishes. The arrangement also depended on a system of visual hierarchy. Each icon and its importance to the theme was considered, sized and placed accordingly. The composition allows for a sense of movement and the viewer can imagine actually walking through each particular area. I introduced colors that I felt best represented the feel and mood of that particular poster's theme, which resulted in a type of narrative for each particular topic.





Figure 12, *Envisioning Louisiana*, 2014, Downtown New Orleans



UPTOWN NEW ORLEANS

Figure 13, *Envisioning Louisiana*, 2014, Uptown New Orleans



THE NORTHSORE

Figure 14, *Envisioning Louisiana*, 2014, The Northshore



BATON ROUGE

Figure 15, *Envisioning Louisiana*, 2014, Baton Rouge





Figure 17, *Envisioning Louisiana*, 2014, Louisiana Festivals



## QR Code Map

Each illustration poster has three main icons that become the focus on an additional information system. This accompanying system (Figure 18) is divided into six different sections that correspond to one of the six illustration posters. Each section focuses on three of the main icons from the illustration it represents, and the side panel gives additional information on the section's overall theme. The icons are shown in black and white and they are labeled, given a brief description, and have an associated QR code. The QR codes are linked to the icons personal page on the *Louisiana Roux* website that I created. The page provides the viewer with additional information on the icon and also contains external links to other sites that can be useful.



Figure 18, QR Code Map, 2014

Pulling out specific icons helps qualify the image as a useful document. An example of this technique is Marta Braun's "The Photographic Work of E.J. Marey" (Figure 19). The photograph shown is a reunion of E.J. Marey's colleagues from 1902. The photograph is accompanied by a diagram that is made of "hat-head outlines" of the people above it. Each outline is linked with the persons name and affiliation.<sup>16</sup> Just like this example, I wanted an image or diagram to accompany my illustrations for labels of greater detail. This additional element provides content to the images and helps the viewer's understanding of the piece and its components.

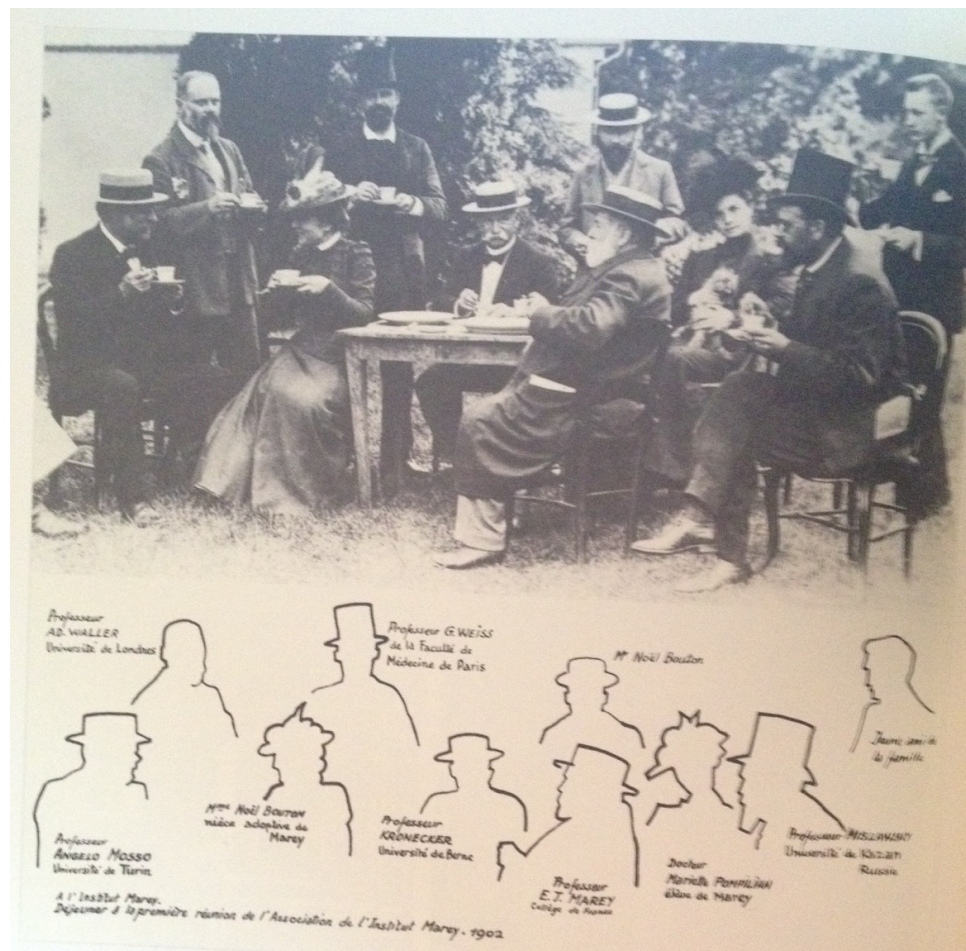


Figure 19, Marta Braun, *The Photographic work of E.J. Marey*, 1983, From Edward Tufte's book *Beautiful Evidence*

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 42.



## Data Series

The second series of infographics are graphical representations of the three Louisiana parishes, and they are based on statistics such as population, income, sales, and landmass. Designs for analytical data should be treated differently, “Designs for analytical diagrams should be clear, efficient, undecorated, maplike; the content should be intense, explanatory, evidential, maplike.”<sup>17</sup> All of the information collected for these posters was gathered from the United States Census Bureau and the latest census taken in 2010. I wanted to represent this data in a clear, explanatory way to provide viewers with information and comparisons based on each parish and the people who occupy that area. This collected data is prevalent to people who are currently living in these areas or others who are interested in relocating to Louisiana. This series is comprised of four information systems. They all have a title, a brief explanation of what is being shown, a key to follow the map, and colors and labels for effective comprehension. Each one of the four systems is divided into three main parts, and there is one part for each of the three Louisiana parishes I am focusing on. Again these parishes are Orleans, East Baton Rouge, and St. Tammany. This division allows the viewer to see all of the information at once and make comparisons among the three areas. By viewing these comparative graphs based on statistical compilations of cultural data, one receives a cross-cultural perspective. I named this series *All Y’all* because each graph focuses on the people and their experiences in that particular area over a year.

Each infographic in the series has a primary graph accompanied by a smaller graph for additional information surrounding the topic. The first information system (Figure 20) in this series is all about the population of each area. The main graph focuses on characteristics like age, race, and education, while the small graph shows what percent of Louisiana’s population is derived from the three parishes. The second system (Figure 21) compares the average income

---

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 79.

of an entire household to the average income of a single person, while also providing information about the general work force. The third system (Figure 22) compares two of the parishes largest industries: retail and accommodation and food services. The smaller graph in this system compares the average retail sales per capita in each of the three parishes. The fourth system (Figure 23) shows the relationship between the area's square mileage and the amount of people living there, thereby indicating what percent of Louisiana's land area comes from the three parishes.

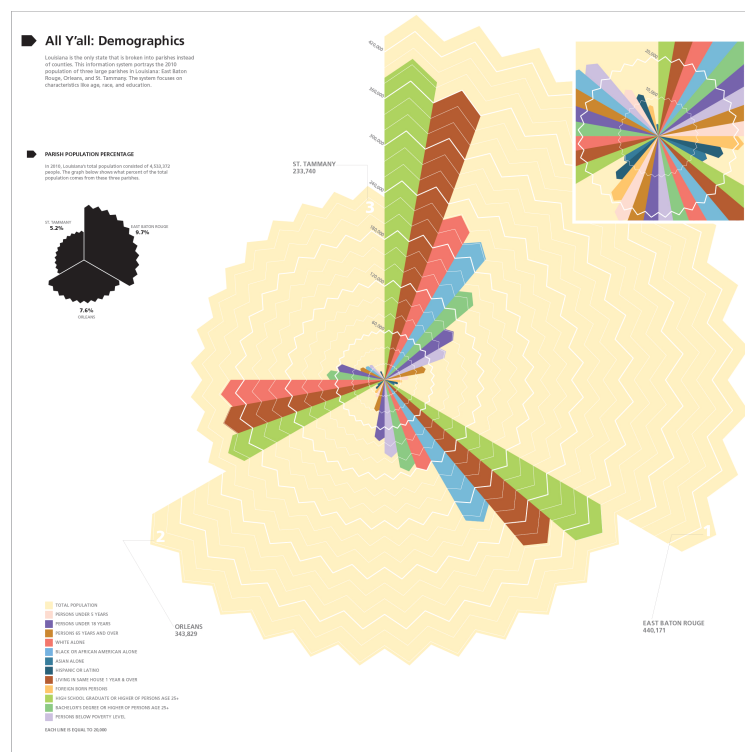


Figure 20, *All Y'all: Demographics*, 2014

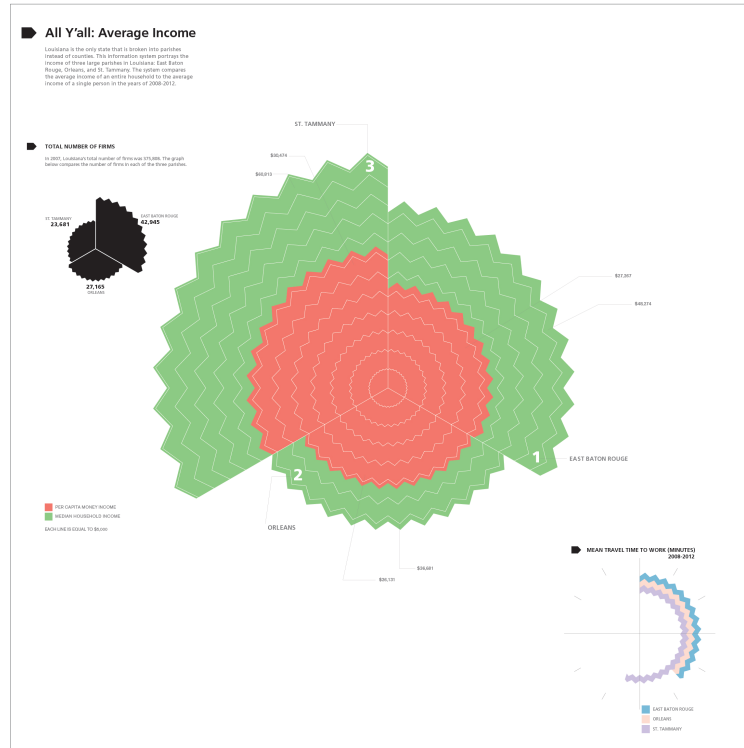


Figure 21, *All Y'all: Average Income, 2014*

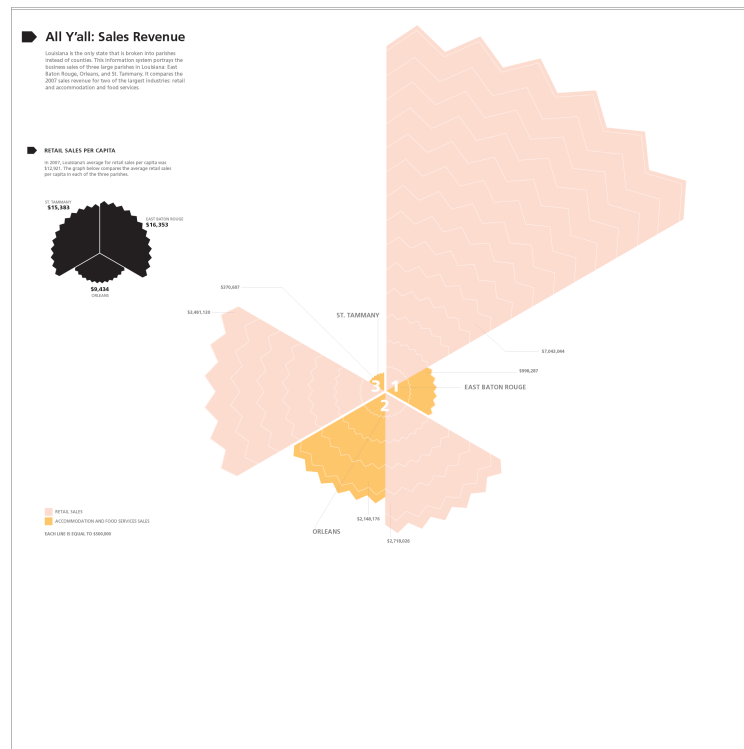


Figure 22, *All Y'all: Sales Revenue, 2014*

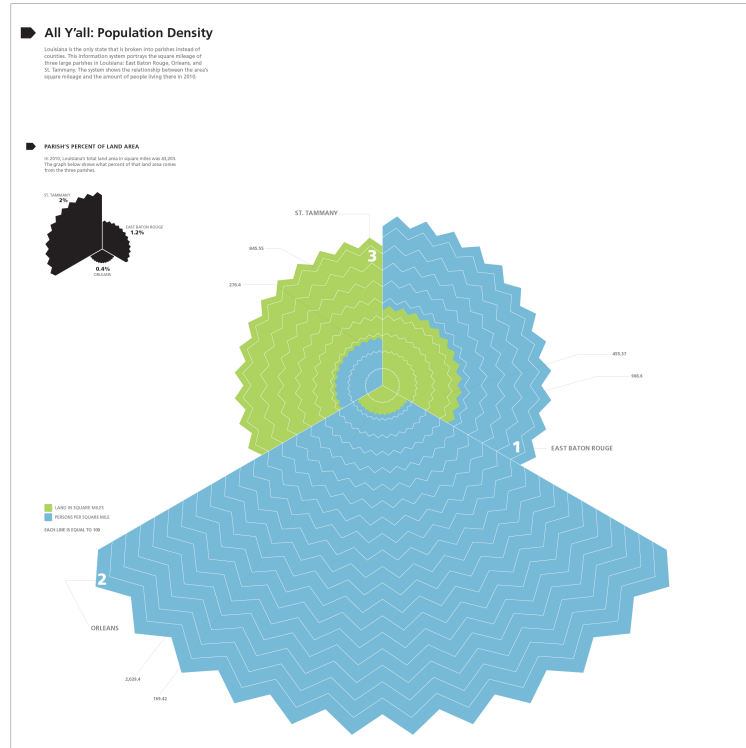


Figure 23, *All Y'all: Sales Revenue, 2014*

These four systems allow viewers to see the analytical side to information design, while still being visually appealing. They express my interest in non-traditional graphical imagery. I create my own systems instead of using the standard visual forms for charts and graphs. I enjoy figuring out a way to represent complex data in a unique, visual perspective. It allows me to put another personal touch to the piece, while intriguing the viewers with details they may have not seen before. The large-scale graphs are seen as an abstraction from far away and as the viewer steps closer they can begin to analyze the system and see the comparisons within.

## CHAPTER 6: SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

My design style is about integrating text, diagram, and imagery. While my thesis work as a whole is comprised of multiple parts and formats, they all play a significant role and show several examples, explorations, and variations of information design. Edward Tufte explains the importance of combining formats, “Well-designed and thoughtfully mapped pictures combine the direct visual evidence of images with the power of diagrams: Image’s representational, local, specific, realistic, unique, detailed qualities; Diagram’s contextualizing, abstracting, focusing, explanatory qualities.”<sup>18</sup> I wanted to explore the capabilities and opportunities a graphic designer is provided with through information design. One advantage to this methodology is that my work can be distributed as pieces of art or as a useable system to help visitors and tourism in Louisiana. The variations in design that I chose permitted these explorations, while allowing me to focus on my other interests like culture, iconography, and audience interaction.

I have proved that abstraction can be used as a successful illustration tool. Through my investigations I have created a formula that can now be applied to generally any place or topic. I begin by abstracting images into simple black and white icons, which become the base ingredients for an illustration. Again, through my icons, I want to explain Louisiana’s culture to visitors through a local’s perspective. This task was challenging because I wanted to go deeper than the surface-level understanding of Louisiana.

I continued with research on Louisiana’s cultural history, such as the difference between Creole and Cajun cuisine and the history of the king cake baby. I also included personal experiences and items that have been a part of my life while growing up in Louisiana. Once the icons are completed, they are pushed further into the form of an illustration. Further research and observation on each icon’s appearance and history is conducted. This included examining actual places, objects, and images to discover significant and specific features. The icons

---

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 45.

became more detailed, colored, and they are placed in an environment with surrounding elements. This is where the compositional arrangement and visual hierarchy are considered.

Each element and its importance to the theme is considered and evaluated. All of the illustration's components have to work together side-by-side and as a cohesive group, while drawing attention to particular areas. By providing this environment and the visual movement it conveys, viewers can actually begin to picture themselves in the illustration.

Through the coordination of themes between the data maps and the illustrations, I allowed viewers to study another depiction of Louisiana and infographics. I presented data, which normally does not exist in a visual form, through graphical imagery. These graphics guide viewers through complex data more rapidly and clearly, while also allowing for new observations and comparisons. My work has permitted me to manipulate data into visual interpretations that now engage the viewer.

I have provided a useable application to my thesis work through the implementation of a website and designated QR codes. These mediums permit audience interaction, while delivering extra information about Louisiana. The combination of images and diagrams, provided by both poster series and the website, gives the viewer an insight on the language and characteristics of Louisiana and the three specific parishes I focused on. Through my investigations and graphic design techniques I am not only able to allow viewers to envision Louisiana's vast culture and heritage, but also my own personal history.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

Poggenpohl, Sharon Helmer. The American Institute of Graphic Arts, " Graphic Design: A Career Guide and Education Directory." Last modified 1993. Accessed December 12, 2013. <http://www.aiga.org/guide-whatisgraphicdesign/>.

Rendgen, Sandra. *Information Graphics*. Köln: Taschen, 2012.

Tufte, Edward R. *Envisioning Information*. Cheshire, Connecticut: Graphics Press LLC, 1990.

Tufte, Edward R. *Beautiful Evidence*. Cheshire, Connecticut: Graphics Press LLC, 2006.

Whitehouse, David. BBC News, "Ice Age Star Map Discovered." Last modified 2000. Accessed April 07, 2014. <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/science/nature/871930.stm>.

## **VITA**

Kelly Mullins, a native of Mandeville, Louisiana, received her bachelor's degree at Spring Hill College in 2011. Thereafter, she made the decision to enter graduate school in the College of Art and Design at Louisiana State University. She anticipates receiving a master's degree in May 2014 and plans to teach at the collegiate level and expand her brand upon graduation.